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(54) **NETWORKED GAMING SYSTEM AND METHOD**

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G07F 17/34 (2006.01)

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CPC **G07F 17/3241** (2013.01); **G07F 17/329** (2013.01); **G07F 17/3213** (2013.01); **G07F 17/3223** (2013.01); **G07F 17/3225** (2013.01); **G07F 17/3258** (2013.01); **G07F 17/3295** (2013.01); **G07F 17/34** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None
See application file for complete search history.

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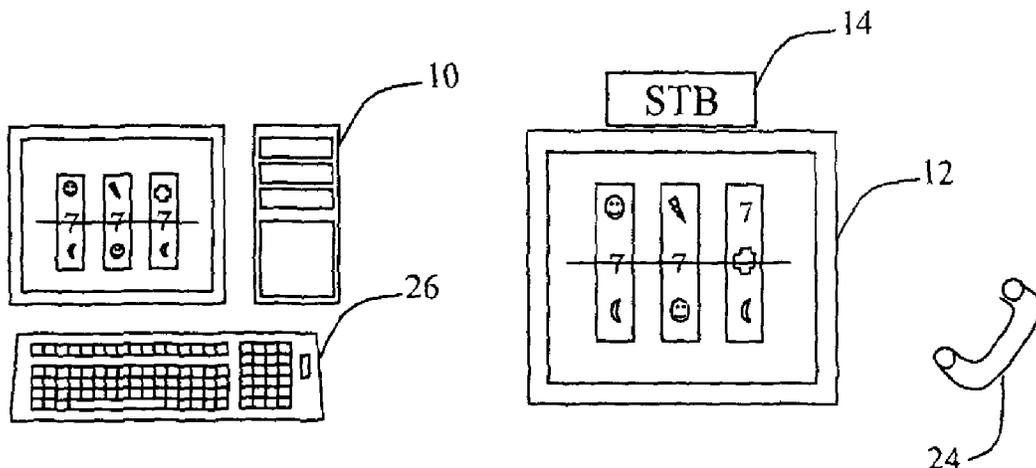
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A networked gaming system and method is described. The networked gaming system and method include a user identification, a transactional component, a networked gaming module, and at least one network access device. The user identification is received by the network access device. The received user identification is compared with registration data in a registration database. A player is provided access to a game when the received user identification matches the registered player data. The transactional component charges the registered player at least one credit for a game outcome. The networked gaming module performs the game operations and generates at least one random game output by random generation at the networked gaming module. The networked gaming module then associates the at least one random game output with an image ID. The networked gaming module then communicates the one or more images corresponding to the image ID to the network access device.

26 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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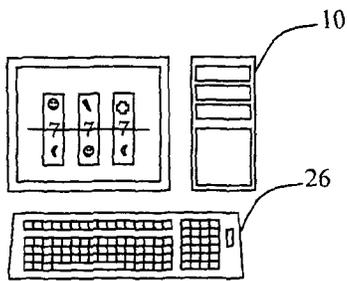


FIG. 1a

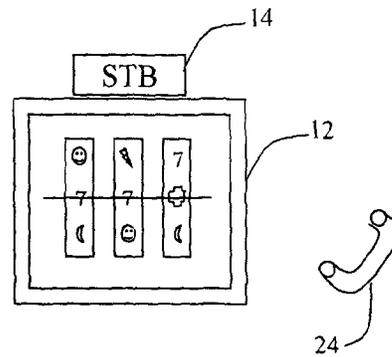


FIG. 1b

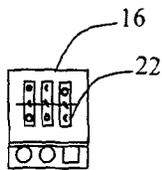


FIG. 1c

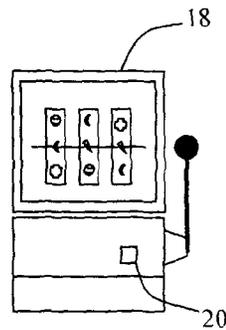
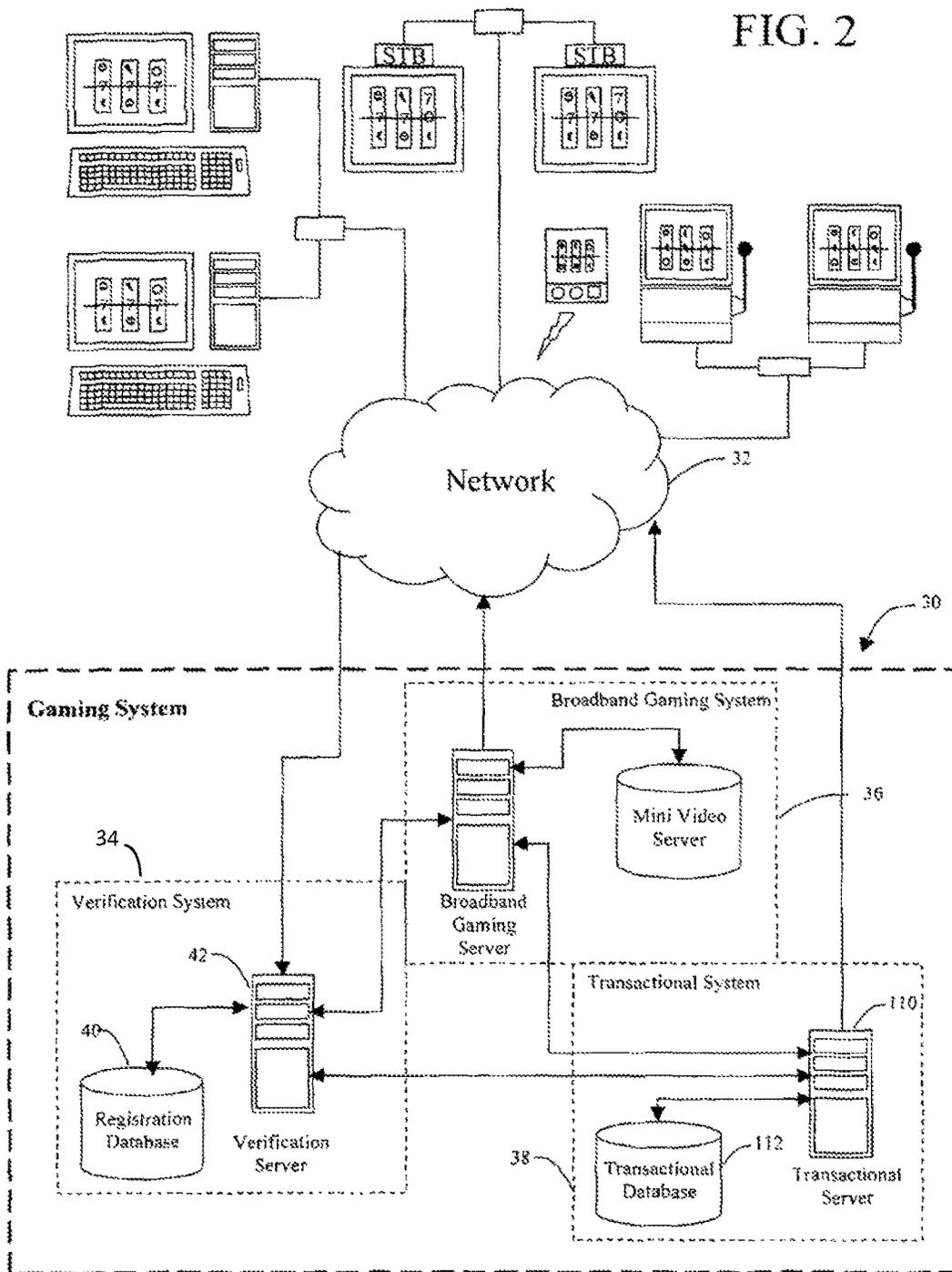


FIG. 1d

FIG. 2



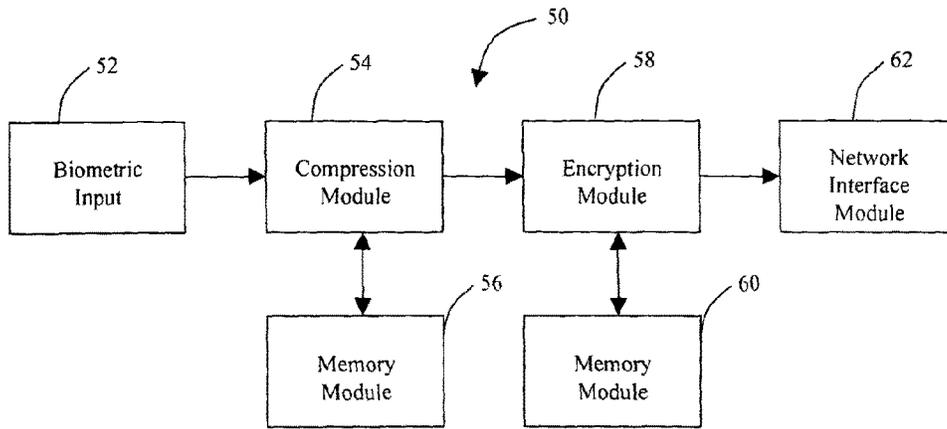


FIG. 3

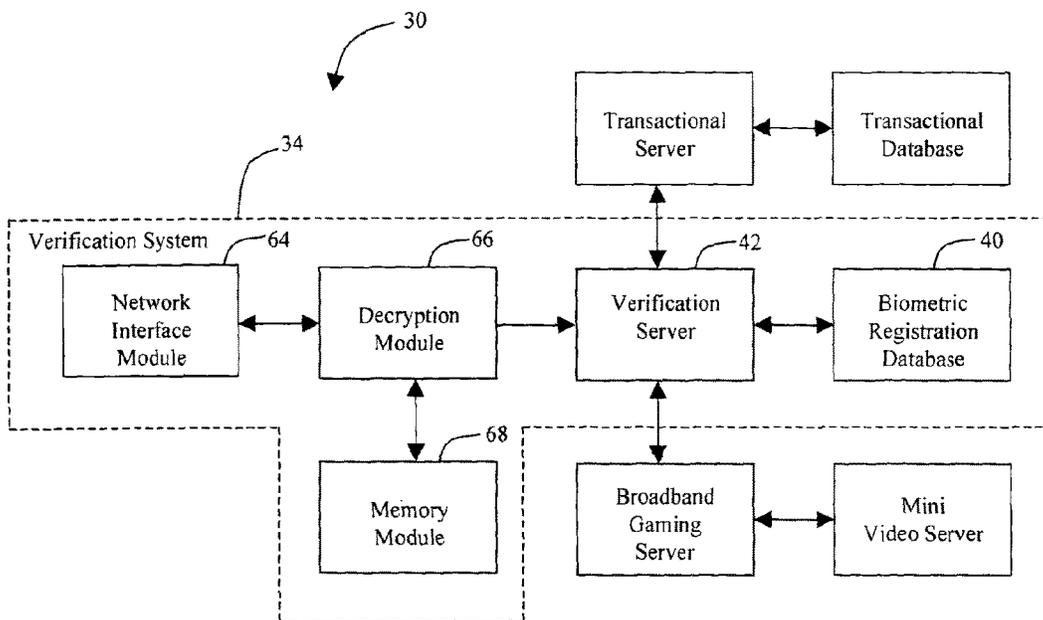


FIG. 4

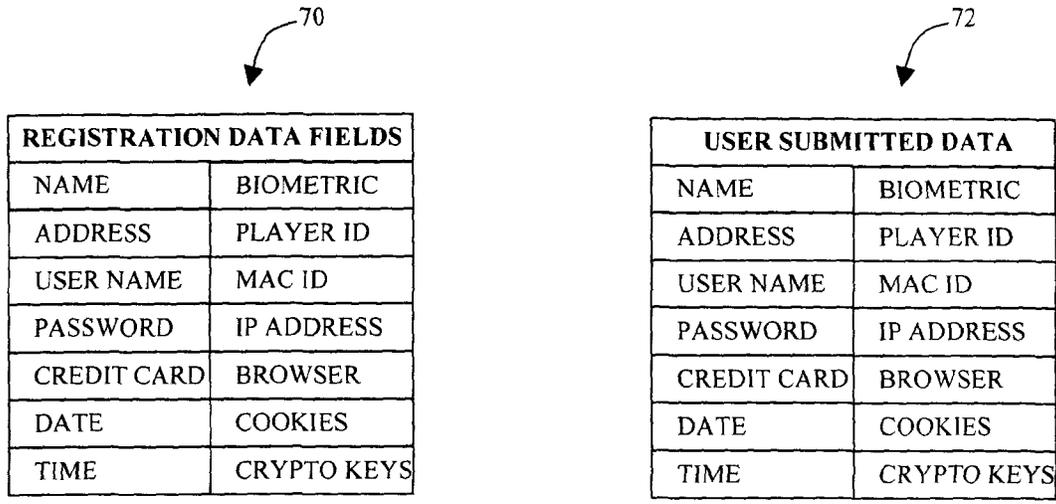


FIG. 5

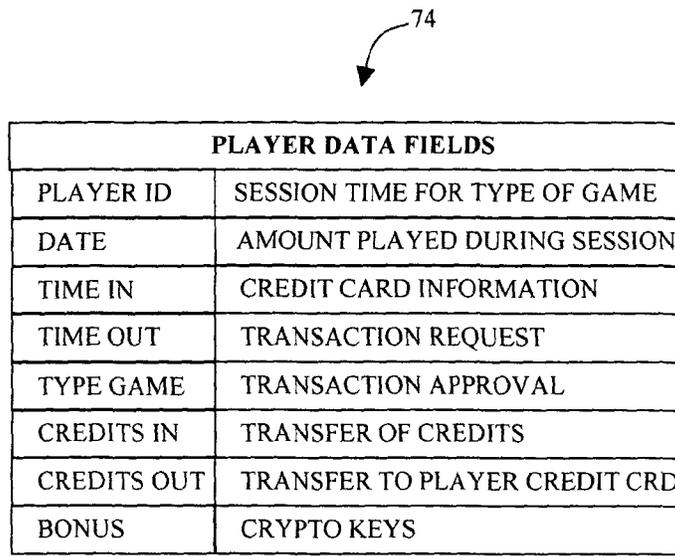


FIG. 6

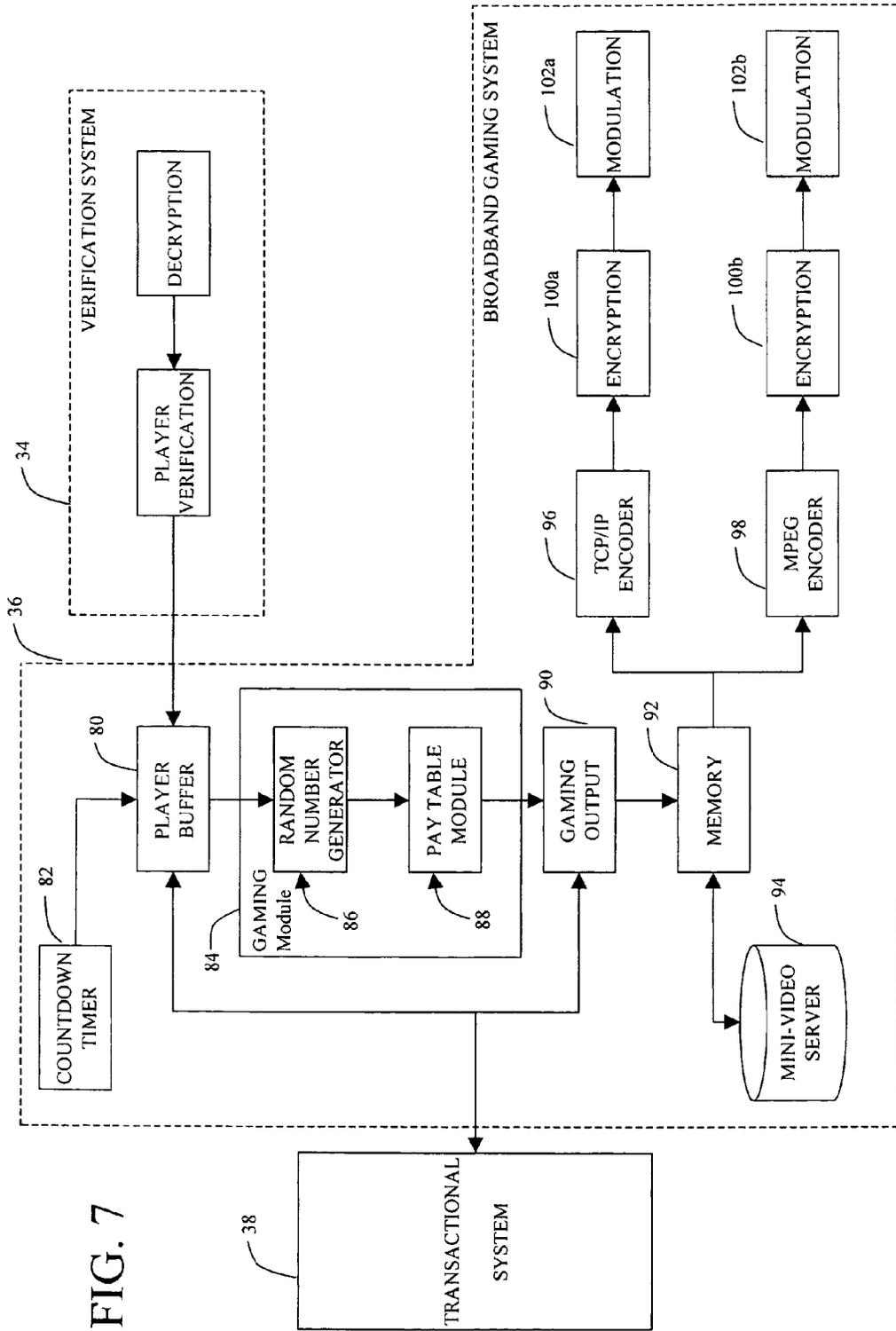


FIG. 7

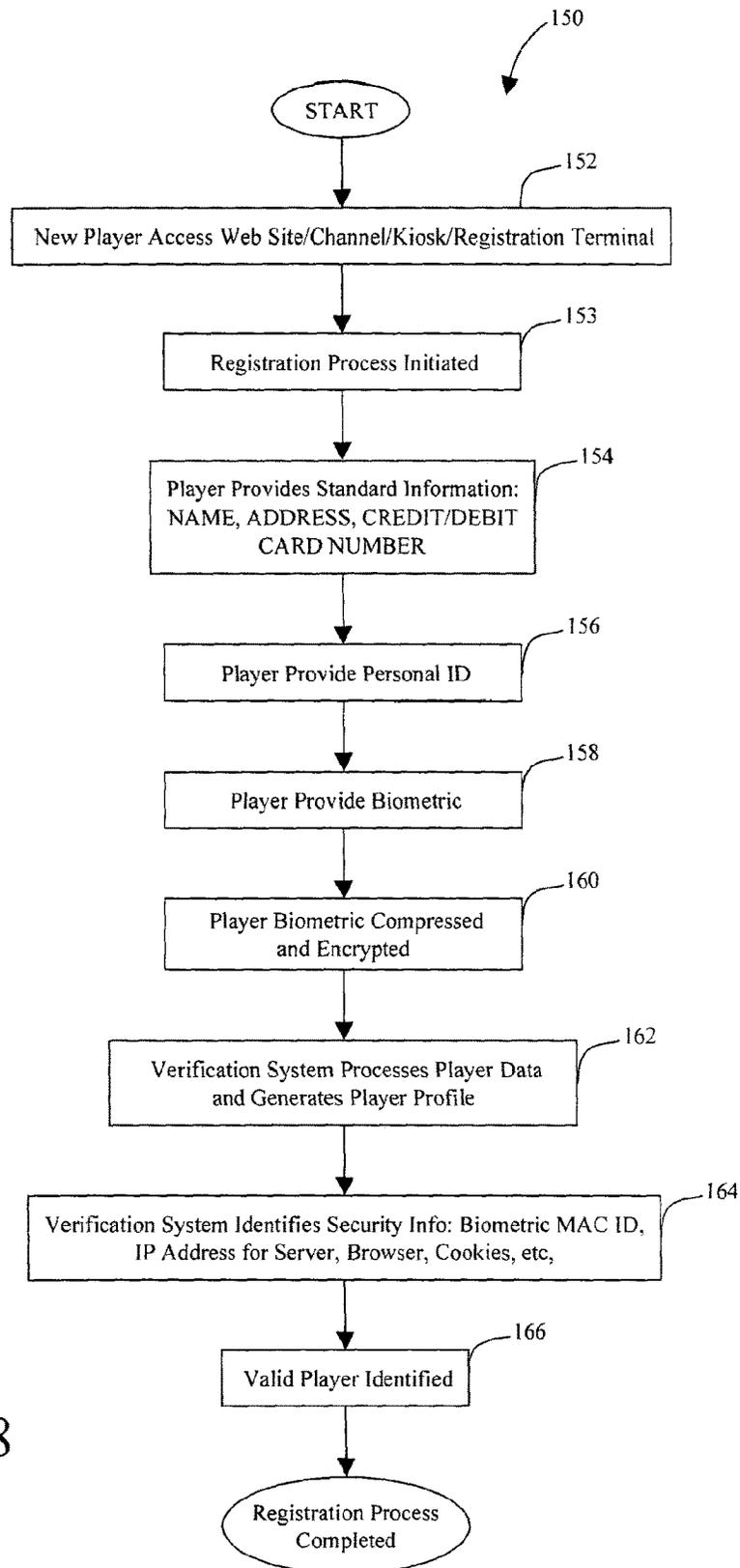


FIG. 8

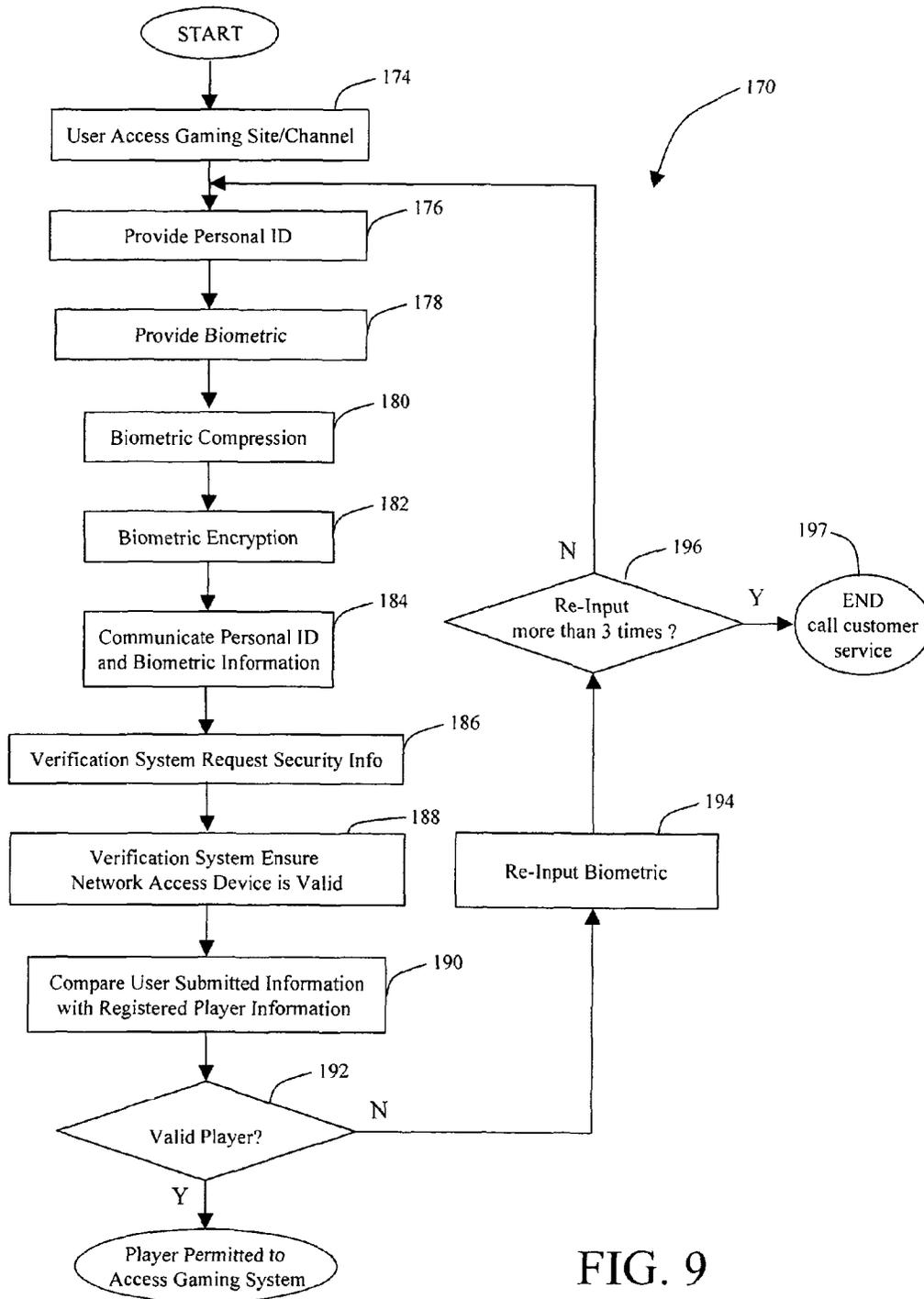


FIG. 9

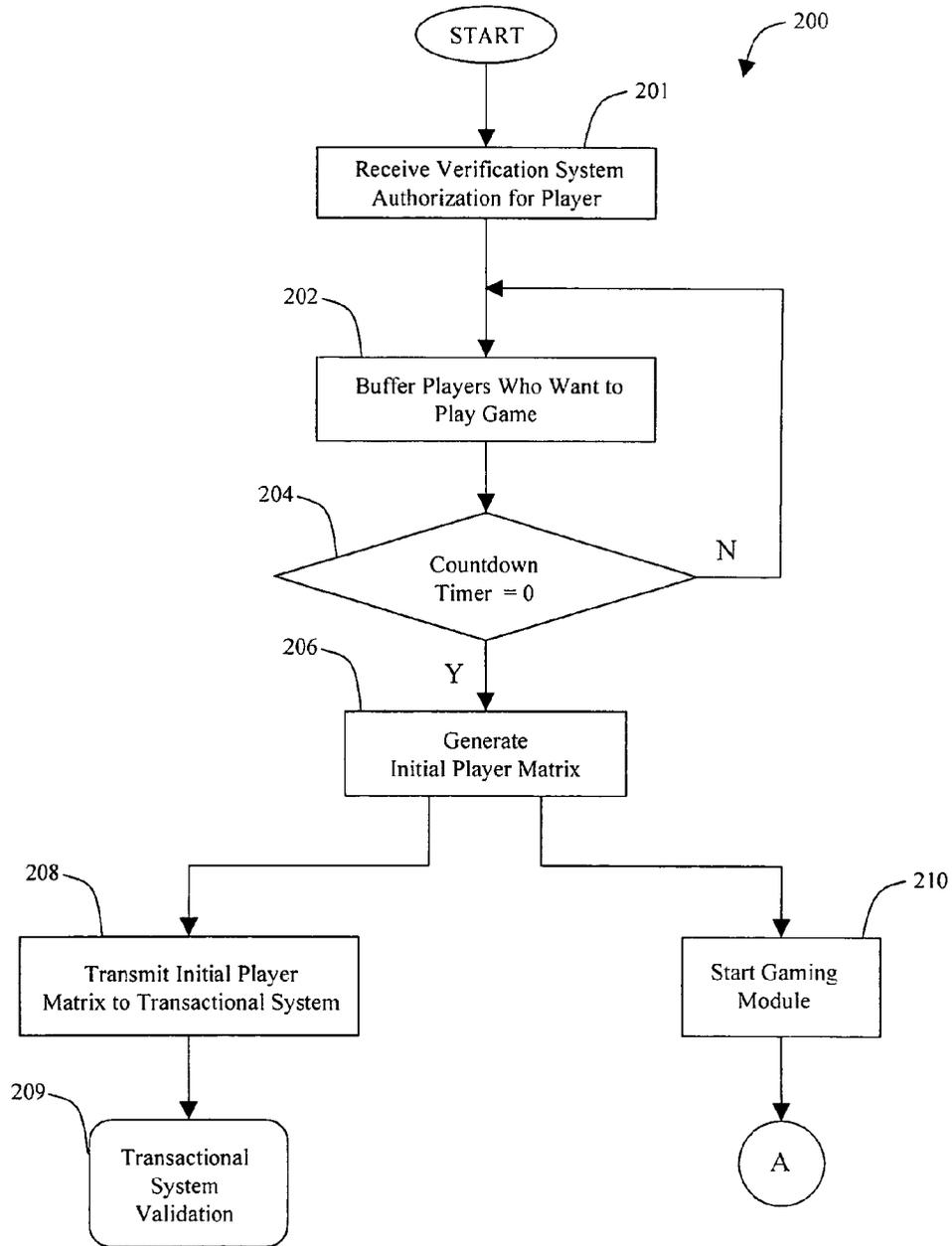


FIG. 10

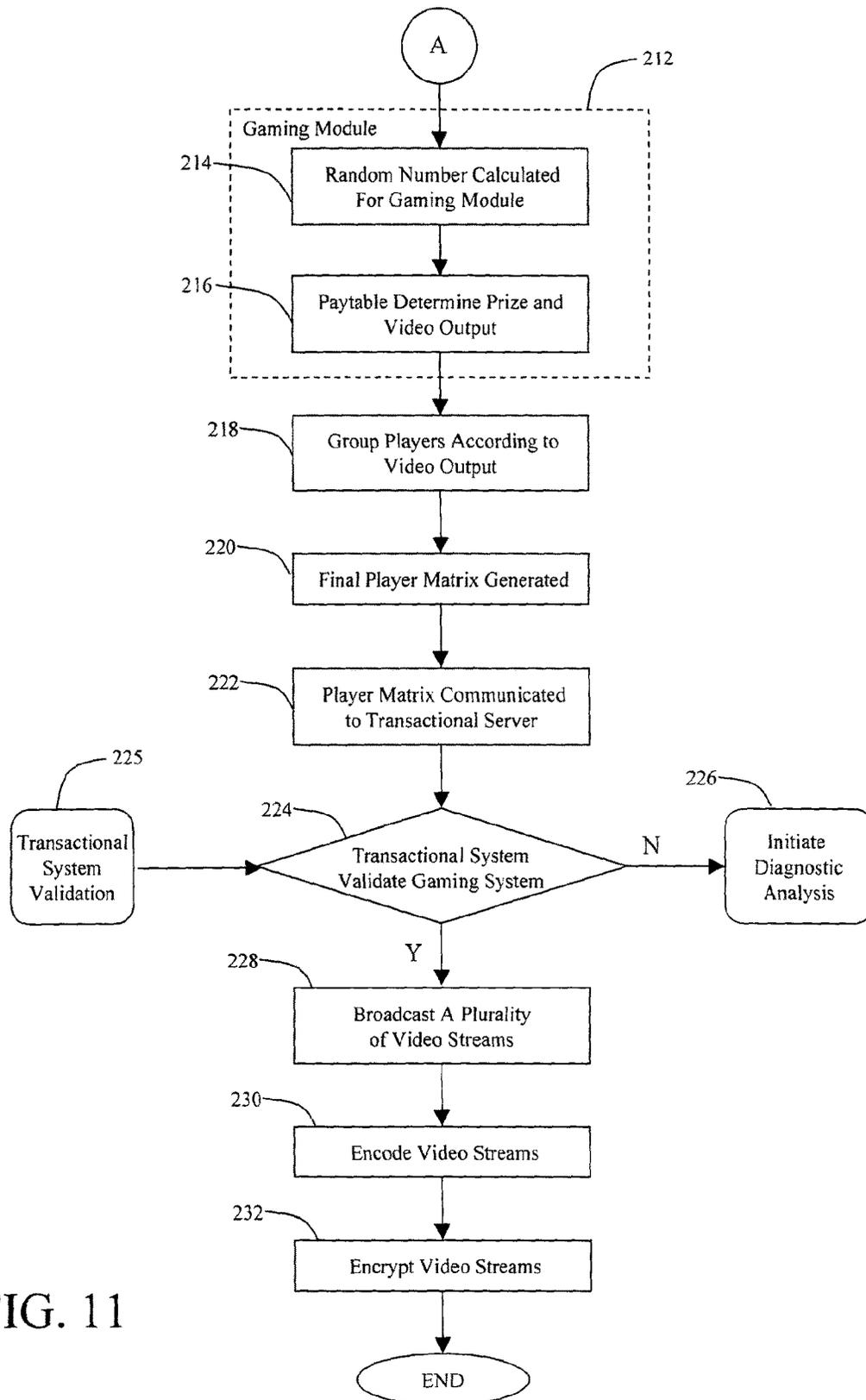


FIG. 11

NETWORKED GAMING SYSTEM AND METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE

This patent application is a Continuation of patent application Ser. No. 14/189,918 (now U.S. Pat. No. 9,646,454), filed on Feb. 25, 2014 that is entitled NETWORKED GAMING SYSTEM AND METHOD, which is a Continuation of patent application Ser. No. 12/981,403 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,747,229), filed on Dec. 29, 2010 that is entitled GAMING SYSTEM NETWORK AND METHOD FOR DELIVERING GAMING MEDIA, which is a Continuation of patent application Ser. No. 10/681,034 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,403,755) filed on Oct. 8, 2003 that is entitled WIRELESS BROADBAND GAMING SYSTEM AND METHOD, which is a Continuation of patent application Ser. No. 09/899,559 filed (now abandoned) on Jul. 5, 2001 that is entitled BIOMETRIC BROADBAND GAMING SYSTEM AND METHOD, which claims the benefit of provisional patent application Ser. No. 60/266,956 filed on Feb. 6, 2001. All of the above are herein incorporated by reference.

FIELD

The present invention relates to a networked gaming system and method. More particularly, the present invention relates to a networked gaming system and method that includes a networked gaming module that generates at least one random game output by random generation at the networked gaming module.

BACKGROUND

The related art includes gaming devices, online gaming, networked interactive gaming, and biometrics.

Gaming Devices

For purposes of this patent, the term "gaming" shall refer to either gambling and/or gaming applications. Gaming devices include games of skill and games of chance. Games of chance include many casino-type gaming devices in which the outcome of the game depends, at least in part, on a randomly generated event. For example, a game of chance may use a random number generator to generate a random or pseudo-random number. The random number may then be compared to a predefined table to determine the outcome of the event. If the random number falls within a certain range of numbers on the table, the player may win a predefined prize. The table may also contain display information that allows the gaming device to generate a display that corresponds to the outcome of the game. The gaming device may present the outcome of the game on a large variety of display devices, such as mechanical spinning reels or video screens.

Games of skill comprise a skill component in which a player combines letters or words (word puzzles), answers questions (trivia), overcomes challenges (video games), competes with other players (networked video games), and the like. Generally, a game of skill is a game requiring a level of skill which does not rely solely on chance. Some games of skill require a high degree of expertise and knowledge and other games of skill require very limited expertise or knowledge.

Online Gaming

In June 2001, Nevada signed a bill that could result in Nevada being the first state to offer legalized gambling over the Internet. The new law authorizes state gaming regulators to set up an infrastructure to license and oversee online

gaming in Nevada when such gaming becomes legal. Online gaming is a federal issue whose legality is unclear at present.

A variety of technological limitations have been asserted as preventing Congress's endorsement of online gaming. These technological limitations are related to the prevention of underage gambling, controlling of gambling addiction, and ensuring the security and reliability of online gaming.

To prevent underage gambling, prior art systems and methods use passwords, user IDs, credit cards, and "click-through" agreements that ask the player to agree to being of legal gambling age by clicking on a button. Presently, there are no systems and methods to control online gambling addiction. With respect to ensuring that online gaming is secure and reliable, prior art systems and methods use various cryptographic techniques such as RSA encryption, digital certificates, or other similar well known cryptographic methods. These cryptographic methods are helpful in ensuring secure communications; however, these cryptographic methods do not ensure that the individual accessing the online game is a valid user.

In view of the prior art systems, a minor or other unauthorized individual simply needs a user ID and a corresponding password to access a gaming site. The obtaining of a user ID and password is a relatively simple task as this information is generally not modified. Commonly the user ID information is acquired by identifying the web site's naming convention for the player. The player password can be easily determined by remembering the pattern of keys typed by the player during the log-on procedures or by simply requesting the password from the player as part of a diagnostic procedure. The latter is a trick commonly used by hackers to access a system. The password problem may be overcome by modifying the password on a regular basis, however the player must then remember the modified password. Should the player forget the password a new password is emailed. During the emailing process it is common for email to be easily intercepted in cyberspace. Additionally, it is common for unauthorized users to simulate being at a certain location by submitting an IP address that identifies an authorized user.

Therefore, a better system and method for identifying a valid user is needed. Additionally, it would be beneficial to provide a gaming system and method that would prevent underage gambling, be simple to implement, prevent gambling addiction, and provide a higher degree of security and reliability from unauthorized users.

Networked Interactive Gaming

Networked interactive gaming in an open networked environment such as the Internet is well known. However, interactive gaming in an open network such as the Internet is confined to communicating with other devices using the same TCP/IP protocols. Currently, networked interactive gaming systems using the TCP/IP protocol are not configured to communicate with interactive set-top boxes using MPEG protocols.

Networked interactive gaming in an open networked environment using traditional security methods such as secure socket layers and digital certificates is well known. However, networked interactive gaming in an open networked environment using traditional security methods does not prevent gambling from a minor having acquired a parent's user ID and password without the parent's consent.

Networked interactive gaming using LANs and WANs for progressive slot machines having large jackpots is also well known. However, networked interactive systems using LANs and WANs for progressive slot machines generally exist in a highly secure proprietary network environment.

Thus, the creation of a progressive slot machine with a large jackpot in an open network environment is not well known.

Biometrics

A biometric is a measurable psychological and/or behavioral trait that can be captured and subsequently compared with another instance at the time of verification. This definition includes the matching of fingerprints, voice patterns, hand geometry, iris and retina scans, vein patterns, and other such methodologies. For purposes of the disclosure described heretofore, the definition of biometrics also includes signature verification, keystroke patterns, and other methodologies weighted towards individual behavior.

Biometric applications for games of skill and games of chance are limited. For example biometric gaming applications are taught in U.S. Pat. No. 6,010,404 granted to Walker et al. teaches a method and apparatus for using player input codes (e.g., numeric, biometric or physical) to affect the outcomes of electronic gambling devices, such as slot machines. Additionally, U.S. Pat. No. 6,142,876 granted to Cumbers teaches a system and method for passively tracking the play of players playing gaming devices such as slot machines. Players provide identification information and facial recognition data is acquired by a digital or video camera. For each player an account file and a file of the facial image data is stored. When the player plays the slot machine, a camera scans the player and acquires facial image data which is compared to stored data to identify the player. Furthermore, U.S. Pat. No. 5,902,983 granted to Crevelt et al. teaches a gaming machine configured to perform EFT transactions which are limited to preset amounts. The patent teaches the use of a fingerprint imaging device and retinal scans for verifying a player's identity.

Although biometric applications for gaming applications are known, biometric applications for online gaming systems are not known. Furthermore, the managing of biometric information and gaming information in an open network environment is not known. Additionally, the use of biometrics in a gaming system and method to prevent underage gambling and prevent gambling addiction is not known.

SUMMARY

A networked gaming system and method is described. The networked gaming system and method includes a user identification, a transactional component, a networked gaming module, and at least one network access device. The user identification is received by the network access device. The received user identification is compared with registration data in a registration database. A player is provided access to a game when the received user identification matches the registered player data. The transactional component charges the registered player at least one credit for a game outcome. The networked gaming module performs the game operations and generates at least one random game output by random generation at the networked gaming module. The networked gaming module then associates the at least one random game output with an image ID. The networked gaming module then communicates the one or more images corresponding to the image ID to the network access device.

In one illustrative embodiment, the registration database includes a registered player biometric. Additionally, an input player biometric is received by the network access device and the player is provided access to the game when the input player biometric matches the registered player biometric.

In another illustrative embodiment, the networked gaming system and method includes a countdown timer that provides a window of time for other players to join the game.

In yet another illustrative embodiment, the networked gaming system and method includes an encryption module that encrypts the plurality of images communicated to each network access device.

In a further illustrative embodiment, the images communicated to the network access device by the networked gaming system are viewable on a browser.

In a still further illustrative embodiment, the one or more images communicated to the network access device game include a slot machine game outcome, and the networked gaming module generates the random game output with a lottery game.

DRAWINGS

Illustrative embodiments are shown in the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1a through FIG. 1d show diagrams of a plurality of illustrative network access devices.

FIG. 2 shows a high level diagram of a gaming system networked to a plurality of network access devices.

FIG. 3 shows a block diagram of an illustrative biometric input module.

FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of a gaming system configured to receive a biometric input from a network access device.

FIG. 5 shows a table of the data fields in a verification system.

FIG. 6 shows a table of the data fields in a broadband gaming system and in a transactional system.

FIG. 7 shows a block diagram of a broadband gaming system.

FIG. 8 shows a flowchart of the registration method for the gaming system.

FIG. 9 shows a flowchart of the verification method for the gaming system.

FIG. 10 shows a flowchart of the information processed by the gaming system.

FIG. 11 is a continuation of the flowchart of the information processed by the gaming system in FIG. 10.

DESCRIPTION

A networked gaming system that comprises a verification system, a broadband gaming system, and a transactional system is described. The verification system operations include ensuring that a user is a registered player by using a biometric input. The broadband gaming system operations include managing and performing at least one game. The transactional system operations include providing oversight for each transaction conducted by the verification system and the broadband gaming system.

A verification system for playing the networked gaming system is described. The networked games include games of chance and games of skill. The verification system communicates with a biometric input module and a network access device to generate a user identification information. The user identification information is compared to information in a registration database. If an acceptable match is made between the user identification information and the information in the registration database, the user is designated as a player. The player then has access to both the broadband gaming system and the transactional system.

A broadband gaming system which is in communication with the verification system is described. The broadband gaming system includes a buffer which stores information about players who desire to play a game. The buffer is

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operatively coupled to a random number generator that generates a random number for each player in the buffer. A payable module in communication with the random number generator determines the outcome associated with the random number generator. The payable also determines which images are associated with the outcome for each player. Preferably, the images are stored on a mini video server and then cached in a memory module. The images are intelligently buffered for downstream communications. In its preferred embodiment, a plurality of encoders are operatively coupled to the memory module caching the broadcast video streams. The plurality of encoders encode the broadcast downstream images according the requirements for each network access device. Each encoder is operatively coupled to an encryption module that encrypts the broadcast. A modulation module is operatively coupled to the encryption module and modulates encrypted images for downstream transmission. Each network access device includes a tuner, a demodulation module, and a decryption module that permits an image to be viewed by the network access device.

A transactional system and method that ensures secure communications occur in the verification system and the broadband gaming system is described. The transactional system also performs accounting, bonusing, tracking, and other such functions. Preferably, the transactional system is capable of receiving a plurality of funds from a financial account and converting them to credits that are used in the broadband gaming system.

The above description sets forth, rather broadly, the more important features of the present disclosure so that the detailed description of the preferred embodiment that follows may be better understood and contributions of the present disclosure to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional features of the disclosure that will be described below and will form the subject matter of claims. In this respect, before explaining at least one preferred embodiment of the disclosure in detail, it is to be understood that the disclosure is not limited in its application to the details of the construction and to the arrangement of the components set forth in the following description or as illustrated in the drawings. The disclosure is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

In the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part of this application. The drawings show, by way of illustration, specific embodiments in which the disclosure may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

Network Access Devices

Referring to FIG. 1a through FIG. 1d, there is shown a plurality of illustrative network access devices. Each of the network access devices is configured to be capable of running a gaming application. For illustrative purposes the gaming application shown simulates the spinning reels of a slot machine.

The network access device in FIG. 1a is a personal computer 10 having a network interface card (not shown) that may be operatively coupled to a modem (not shown). Another network access device shown in FIG. 1b includes a television 12 operatively coupled to an interactive set-top box 14 that is operatively coupled to a cable network (not shown). The other network access device shown in FIG. 1c

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is a wireless device 16 such as a digital phone or personal digital system (PDA) or other such wireless device which is configured to communicate with a network using wireless networking protocols. Yet another network access device is shown in FIG. 1d and includes a gaming terminal 18 such as a slot machine on a casino floor that is operatively coupled to a plurality of other gaming terminals. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art of networking that the distinguishing feature between each of these network access devices is the type of communications protocols used by each device to enable communications between similar network access devices.

Each of the network access devices either includes a biometric input module operatively coupled to the network access device or includes a biometric input module communicatively coupled to the network access device. A biometric is a measurable psychological and/or behavioral trait that can be captured and subsequently compared with another instance at the time of verification. This definition includes the matching of fingerprints, voice patterns, hand geometry, iris and retina scans, vein patterns, and other such methodologies. For purposes of the disclosure described heretofore, the definition of biometrics also includes signature verification, keystroke patterns, and other methodologies weighted towards individual behavior.

In one illustrative embodiment, the biometric input module is a fingerprint scanner 20 resident on the gaming terminal 18 wherein the biometric input is a fingerprint. In another illustrative embodiment, the biometric input module is the screen 22 of wireless device 16 wherein the screen is configured to receive a biometric input such as a user signature. In yet another illustrative embodiment, the biometric input module is a telephone 24 that is configured to receive a voice pattern from a user prior to engaging communications with the interactive set-top box 14. In yet another illustrative embodiment the biometric input module is a keyboard 26 operatively coupled to computer 10 wherein the user is requested to input a keystroke pattern. An illustrative example of a biometric input module operatively coupled to the network access device is shown in FIG. 1d having the fingerprint scanner 20 on the gaming terminal 18. An illustrative example of a biometric input module, e.g. the telephone 24, communicatively coupled to the network access device, e.g. the interactive set-top box 14, is shown in FIG. 1b.

The biometric input is used to prevent unauthorized gaming activity and efficiently store credits on the user's behalf. By way of example and not of limitation, unauthorized gaming activity includes preventing underage gaming and prohibiting players with histories of gambling addiction. Additionally, player credits may be stored on a network so that the player does not need to carry coins, paper currency, coupons, credit cards, or debits cards to play a game. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that different biometric input modules may be used in conjunction with different network access devices.

Gaming System

Referring to FIG. 2 there is shown a high level block diagram of a gaming system 30 in communication with a plurality of network access devices coupled to a network 32. The gaming system includes a verification system 34, a broadband gaming system 36, and a transactional system 38. The verification system 34 verifies that a user operating a network access device is a registered player. The broadband gaming system 36 performs the function of generating a game and broadcasting the game results to each of the

network access devices. The transactional system **38** performs a plurality of functions including tracking each transaction performed by both the verification system and the broadband gaming system and conducting electronic fund transfers.

Verification System

The verification system **34** verifies that a user desiring to play the game is a registered player. The verification system **34** communicates with the biometric input module and a network access device to generate user identification information. The user identification information includes information such as cryptographic keys that are necessary to securely identify the network access device. The user identification information also includes media access control (MAC) identification and confirmation of the user Internet Protocol (IP) address. The user identification information is compared to information in a registration database **40** by a verification server **42**. If an acceptable match is made between the user identification information and the information in the registration database, the user is designated as a player. The player then has access to either the broadband gaming system **36** or the transactional system **38**.

In an alternative embodiment the user identification information is housed in a smart card (not shown) that is in communication with the verification system **34**. The smart card includes a stored biometric which is used to identify the user as a player. Cryptographic keys are then exchanged between the verification system **34** and the smart card to provide the player access to either the broadband gaming system or the transactional system **38**.

Referring to FIG. **3** there is shown an illustrative biometric input module **50**. By way of example, the illustrative biometric input module **50** is a fingerprint scanner. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that the use of the fingerprint scanner as the illustrative biometric input module is not restrictive. A scanned fingerprint image is collected by the biometric input **52**. After the scanned fingerprint image is collected, the fingerprint image is compressed by the compression module **54**. A memory module **56** provides fast memory resources for the compression of the fingerprint image. After compression, the fingerprint image is encrypted by the encryption module **58** for downstream transmission. The encryption module **58** also includes a memory module **60** that provides fast memory resources for the encryption of the compressed fingerprint image. An encrypted compressed fingerprint image is then communicated to network **32** (see FIG. **2**) using the network interface module **62**.

Referring to FIG. **4** there is shown a block diagram of the verification system **34**. The verification system is operatively coupled to network **32** with network interface module **64**. The network interface module **64** is configured to receive user identification information generated by the network access devices and from the biometric input module. Preferably, the biometric and other user identification information received by the verification system is an encrypted biometric that is decrypted by decryption module **66**. A memory module **68** is preferably a fast memory that expedites the decryption process. After decryption the biometric and remaining user identification information is processed by the verification server. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the verification server **42** may house the network interface module **64**, decryption module **66** and the memory module **68**. The verification server **42** is also in operative communication with a registration database **40**. The verification server **42** performs the function of matching the user identification information collected from the net-

work access device with the player information in the registration database **40**. Additionally, the verification server **42** performs the caching functions needed to ensure that once a player has been identified during an initial game, subsequent usage by the same player proceeds quickly.

Preferably, the verification server **42** identifies registered players using a biometric template of the registered player residing on the registration database **40**. The registered players are referenced with personal ID numbers. When a transaction is undertaken, the user firstly calls up the particular template from the registration database **40** by inputting a personal ID. The personal ID includes a particular number, user ID, password, or other such identification techniques. The inputting of the personal ID is accomplished with a familiar numeric keypad, keyboard, magstripe card, or smart card. The correct template is called and held in memory ready for comparison with the biometric sample provided by the user. A comparison takes place that results in a binary true or false condition as to the identity of the user. The user is in effect claiming an identity by inputting the personal ID and the system is subsequently verifying that the claim is genuine according to the matching criteria setup within the system.

Referring to FIG. **5** there is shown the registration data fields **70** and user submitted data fields **72**. The registration data fields **70** include data fields that comprise the user identification information. The registration data fields include user identification information such as player name, address, user name, password, credit card information, and the date and time of the registration. The player biometric and personal ID also comprises the user identification information and provides unique information about the player. The personal ID may be the same as the user name or password. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that some biometric information may be compressed. Furthermore, the user identification information includes data about the network access device and the network connection such as MAC ID, IP addresses, browser type, any cookies resident on the network access device, etc. Finally, the user identification system includes cryptographic keys which are used to encrypt and decrypt the communications between the verification system and each of the network access devices.

The user submitted data fields **72** mirror the registration data fields **70**. The user submitted data fields receive data generated by a user that is attempting to access the broadband gaming system **36**. The user submitted information is carefully analyzed to ensure that a valid user is being identified. It is well known that the connection of one network access device to another network access device generates security concerns. Preferably, the present verification system operates using a fast hardware-type firewall that performs a stateful multilayer inspection. In its preferred embodiment the firewall provides packet filtering using a secure protocol such as IPsec. This protocol provides encryption of the data at the packet level as well as at the source address level. Without access to the encryption keys, a potential intruder would have difficulty penetrating the firewall. Additionally, it would be preferable to provide a circuit level gateway and an application level gateway. The circuit level gateway works on the session layer of the OSI model or the TCP layer of the TCP/IP model, and monitors TCP handshaking between packets to determine whether a requested session is legitimate. The application level gateway filters data packets at the application layer of the OSI

model. A stateful multilayer inspection firewall offers a high level of security, good performance, and transparency to end users.

Referring to FIG. 6 there is shown the player data fields 74 that are generated by the broadband gaming system and the transactional system after the user has been verified to be a registered player. The player data fields 74 are used to generate a player matrix which is used as an additional internal security measure. The player data fields 74 include a player ID that identifies the player, and a timestamp that provides the date, time in, and time out by the player during the game. Additionally, the type of game, credits played, and credits remaining are monitored. Based on the level of player activity a bonus is provided to the player. Further still the session time for each type of game and the amount played during the session is monitored to better define the type of games the player likes. Transactional information is also monitored and updated, preferably, by the transactional system 38. The transactional information includes credit card information, transaction requests, transaction approval, conversion of monetary funds to credits for playing the game, any transfers of credits for playing the game, and conversions from credits to monetary funds that are credited to the player's financial account. Preferably, communications between the transactional system and the broadband gaming system are conducted in a secure environment using cryptographic keys. Although the use of cryptography within the private network may appear excessive, one of the greatest security threats within a private network comes from its own employees. Therefore, it is preferable to use internal firewalls for communications between the broadband gaming system, the transactional system and the verification system.

Broadband Gaming System

A more detailed drawing of the broadband gaming system is provided in FIG. 7. The dashed boundary in FIG. 7 defines the broadband gaming system 36. After player verification is completed at the verification system 36, the broadband gaming system 36 is engaged. The broadband gaming system 34 includes a player buffer 80 configured to receive the players who will be playing the game. The player buffer 80 generates an initial player matrix with player data fields 74 (shown on FIG. 6).

A countdown timer 82 is coupled to the player buffer 80. Preferably, the countdown timer 82 is also displayed to the player. The countdown timer 82 provides a window of time within which players may join the game. The players that have joined the game before the end of the timing period are stored in the buffer. When the timing period reaches zero the initial player matrix is communicated to the transactional system 38 and to the gaming module 84.

The gaming module 84 provides a game that is played by the plurality of players. The game may include a plurality of different games and the type of game is not restrictive to this disclosure. Preferably, the gaming module 84 includes at least one random number generator 86 and a payable module 88.

The random number generator 86 is operatively coupled to the player buffer. The random number generator 86 generates at least one random number that is stored in the player matrix. In one embodiment, at least one random number is generated for the plurality of players playing the game. In an alternative embodiment, at least one random number is generated for each player. In yet another embodiment, a plurality of random numbers are generated that are

applied to the plurality of players playing the game. Preferably, the random number generator 86 is a fast hardware module.

A payable module 88 is operatively coupled to the random number generator 86. The payable module 88 is a programmable module that determines the type of prize awarded to the player based on the random number generated by the random number generator 86. In one embodiment, the payable module 88 is a field programmable gate array. Preferably, the payable module 88 also includes an image ID that is associated with the outcome determined by the payable module 88.

A gaming output module 90 revises the player matrix to include the outcome for each player. Additionally, the gaming output module 90 groups the players according to the image ID. Based on the results generated by the gaming module 84, the gaming output module 90 generates a final player matrix that is communicated to the transactional server 38 and to a memory module 92.

Preferably, the memory module 92 has stored a plurality of images in a fast memory by the time the final player matrix is communicated to the memory module 92. In operation, the memory module 92 is enabled before the final matrix is communicated to the memory module 92. By way of example, when the game is engaged the memory module 92 begins the process of finding the applicable images associated with the image IDs in the mini-video server 94 and transfers the images to the fast memory module 92. Thus, when the gaming output is received by the memory, the images are stored in the fast memory module 92. In one embodiment, the memory module 92 then broadcasts the images to encoders 96 and 98. In an alternative embodiment, the memory module 92 is operatively coupled to an intelligent router (not shown) that routes the images to the appropriate encoders 96 and 98.

The appropriate encoder then receives the images and converts them to a format which meets the requirements for the appropriate network access device. By way of example, an IP encoder 96 encodes a plurality of JPEG images for viewing on a conventional web browser, and an MPEG encoder 98 encodes the plurality of JPEG images into an MPEG stream that is viewed on a television via an interactive set-top box.

Encryption modules 100a and 100b are operatively coupled to encoders 96 and 98, respectively, and receive the encoded images and encrypt the encoded images in manner well known to those skilled in the art. Modulation modules 102a and 102b are operatively coupled to encryption modules 100a and 100b, respectively, and modulate encrypted encoded images for downstream transmission in a manner well known to those skilled in the art.

Preferably, the broadband gaming system occupies one downstream band, i.e. one 6 or 8 MHz band, in the interactive set-top-box environment. In the web-based broadcast environment, the broadband gaming system occupies a downstream channel much like a standard streaming media website.

It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that the broadband gaming system can play more than one game at a time. The system may be designed to operate in a multi-tasking mode where more than one game is played at a time. Additionally, the system may be designed to operate in a fast serial mode in which a game is played while the countdown timer is waiting for the next queue to be filled.

Transactional System

Referring back to FIG. 2, there is shown the transactional system 38 which comprises a transactional server 110 and a transactional database 112. The transactional system 38 performs a plurality of functions including tracking each transaction performed by both the verification system and the broadband gaming system. Additionally, the transactional system 38 is configured to authorize and conduct electronic fund transfers. Furthermore, the transactional system 38 performs such operations as player tracking, managing loyalty programs, engaging bonus games, determining bonus prizes and interfacing with accounting programs.

Method for Registering a Player

Referring to FIG. 8 there is shown a flowchart of the registration method for the gaming system 30. The registration method 150 begins when a prospective player first accesses a website, channel, kiosk or other such registration terminals as described in block 152. The method then proceeds to block 153.

At block 153, the registration process is initiated. By way of example and not of limitation, a registration terminal may provide a hyperlink to a registration window that prompts the prospective player for information. The method then proceeds to block 154.

At block 154, the prospective player provides registration identification information such as name, address, credit card number, and other information necessary to create a registration file for the prospective player. The method then proceeds to block 156.

At block 156, the prospective player is prompted for a personal ID. The personal ID may be a user ID, a password, a numeric combination, or any other such identification information. The personal ID is used during the verification process to identify a biometric template for the prospective player. The method then proceeds to block 158.

At block 158, the prospective player submits a biometric to the registration terminal. By way of example and not of limitation the biometric is a fingerprint. Any other biometric may also be used. The method then proceeds to block 160 or 162.

At block 160, the biometric input is compressed and encrypted. It is preferable for certain biometric inputs to be compressed such as fingerprint scans, retinal scans, and other such scanning techniques. Other biometric inputs such as voice patterns and signatures do not have to be compressed. The process of encrypting biometric inputs is necessary in an open network environment. The process of encrypting may not be necessary on a private proprietary network. Therefore, it shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that the compression and encryption processes in block 160 may not be necessary for every biometric input.

At block 162, the prospective player information is stored in the verification system and a player profile is updated accordingly. Alternatively, the prospective player information is stored on a smart card. The method then proceeds to block 164.

At block 164, security information about the registration terminal is collected. The registration information identifies the registration terminal as being a secure terminal. The registration terminal provides information such as the MAC ID for the biometric input module, the IP address for the server communicating with the registration terminal, and the cryptographic keys associated with the registration terminal. The registration terminal includes the network access

devices described in FIG. 1a through FIG. 1d, as well as kiosks and other such registration terminals.

At block 166, the prospective player is identified as a registered player and the registration database 40 is updated accordingly. The registration process is broken out into separate components for security purposes. Once a validly registered player is identified by the verification system, the registration process is completed.

Method for Player Verification

Referring to FIG. 9 there is shown a method 170 for player verification used by the verification system 34. The player verification process includes receiving user identification information from a network access device. The method is initiated at block 174 when a user accesses a website or channel displaying the game. The method then proceeds to block 176.

At block 176, the personal ID is provided by the user. The personal ID is used by the verification system to find a biometric template for determining whether the user is a registered player. The method then proceeds to block 178.

At block 178, the biometric input module of the network access device receives a biometric from the user. As previously described the biometric input module can be one of plurality of biometric inputs. Depending on the type of biometric, the biometric may be compressed as described by block 180 and encrypted as described by block 182. At block 184, the biometric and the personal ID is then communicated through a network 32 to the verification system 34. Alternatively, the biometric and personal ID are communicated to a smart card for verification.

At block 186, the verification system 34 requests security information from the network access devices. The security information identifies the network access devices as being a valid network access device. The method then proceeds to block 188.

At block 188, the verification system 34 processes the security information to ensure that the security information is generated by the appropriate network access device, and to ensure that the security information has not been compromised. Preferably, the verification system 34 performs a stateful multilayer inspection as described above. The method then proceeds to block 190.

At block 190, the user submitted player information is compared to the registered player information. If a determination is made at decision diamond 192 that the submitted player information is not a valid, registered player the method proceeds to block 194. At block 194, the user is requested to re-input the biometric. If the biometric is input more than three times, as provided by decision diamond 196, the user is requested to contact customer service.

If a match is found at decision diamond 192 between the user submitted information and the registered player information, the user is identified as a valid player then the player proceeds to the broadband gaming system 36.

Method for Operation of Broadband Gaming System

Referring to FIG. 10 and FIG. 11, there is shown a flowchart 200 of the information processed by the broadband gaming system 36. The process is engaged by performing the verification process in which the verification system identifies a player as in block 201. After the verification process has been completed the method proceeds to block 202.

At block 202, the players who desire to play a particular game are stored in a buffer until the particular game is engaged. The method then proceeds to decision diamond 204.

At decision diamond **204**, the countdown timer **82** determines if the period during which the game is open has been closed. If the game remains open, additional players may be received by the broadband gaming system. If the game is closed because the period during which the game is open has expired, then the method proceeds to block **206**.

At block **206**, the initial player matrix described above is generated. The initial player matrix includes information about the player, the type of game, and other such information about the game as described by the player data fields **74** shown in FIG. **6**. The initial player matrix is then communicated to block **208** which transmits initial player matrix to the transactional system for validation. Additionally, the initial player matrix is communicated to the next block **210** in the broadband gaming system which starts the gaming module.

At block **210**, the initial player matrix is received by the gaming module **84** and the gaming module **84** is engaged. At a minimum the gaming module **84** comprises a random number generator **86** and a payable module **88**. The random number generator generates at least one random number that is used during the game. The payable module **88** is used to determine the prize associated with the at least one random number.

Referring to FIG. **11**, a continuation of the broadband gaming system method is shown. By way of example, the gaming module may comprise a plurality of different random number generators. The blocks **214** and **216** describe the processes performed by a random number generator and a payable module, respectively. The random number generator **86** of block **214** determines the winning combination of numbers for the game. At block **216**, the payable module **88** is used to determine the prize awarded to the player. Preferably, the payable module **88** is also configured to provide image IDs that identify the images associated with the prize. Preferably, the payable module **88** is resident in both the broadband gaming system and the transactional system. The purpose for this redundancy is as a security check for output generated by the gaming module. The method then proceeds to block **218**.

At block **218** the player outputs with the same image IDs are grouped together. The grouping process is performed to simplify the broadcasting of the images to the plurality of players. By grouping the players according to the same image ID and having identified the network access device used by the player, a dynamic broadcasting method is created which occupies minimal downstream bandwidth. The method then proceeds to block **220**.

At block **220** a final player matrix is completed. The final player matrix includes the same data fields as the initial player matrix. Additionally, the final player matrix includes the random number output and the payable output. The final player matrix is then communicated to the transactional system as described in block **222**. The method then proceeds to decision diamond **224**.

At decision diamond **224**, a validation procedure is conducted. The validation procedure essentially compares the transactional system's reverse calculation of the random numbers with the random numbers generated by the gaming module. If the random numbers in the transactional system are not the same or similar to the random numbers generated by the random number generator, a system failure or security breach is detected. If a security breach or system failure is detected, the method then proceeds to process block **226**, which initiates diagnostic procedures. If the random numbers match, then the method proceeds to block **228**.

At block **228**, the plurality of images are broadcast. The images are preferably broadcast along one downstream channel for each network access device. However, traffic considerations may require the use of a plurality of downstream channels. By way of example, for DOCSIS and DSL type downstream transmissions, the streaming video preferably occupies a portion of the bandwidth available for a cable modem or DSL modem, respectively. In an alternative example, for an interactive set-top box environment, the downstream channel preferably occupies one 6 MHz or 8 MHz band or a portion of the 6 MHz or 8 MHz band. The method then proceeds to the next block **230**.

At block **230**, the broadcast images are encoded for downstream transmission. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that downstream transmission systems are well known and can be easily integrated into the systems and method described in this patent. The method then proceeds to block **232**.

At block **232**, the broadcast images are encrypted for downstream transmission. The purpose for downstream encryption is to prevent unauthorized access to the downstream signal. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various secure systems and methods for downstream transmission of images are well known.

It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that a plurality of games may be played simultaneously. The games may be played in a distributed/parallel manner or in serial manner.

An Illustrative Game

An illustrative game is described to show how the system and method described above operates. The illustrative game described herein is a progressive slot machine. It is well known that in the United States many states have legalized lottery games even though other games of chance, such as progressive slot machines, have not been legalized. It is also well known that in casino gaming floors the most popular games are progressive slot machines. The present illustrative game operates on the system and method described above and provides an output similar to a progressive slot machine with a lottery type input.

The illustrative game includes first having a player provide a plurality of letters or numbers that are either generated by the player or are selected in a random manner. The random number generator of the gaming module is then engaged and a gaming module random number is generated. Preferably, the order that the random numbers were generated is used to determine the prize awarded to the player. A programmed payable is then used to compare the player selected numbers to the gaming module random numbers according to the rules programmed into the payable module. Based on the results of this comparison, a prize is awarded to the player. An image ID is associated with the prize awarded. The plurality of players are then grouped according to their respective image IDs. A broadcast stream for the plurality of images associated with each image ID is broadcast to each player.

A more concrete example includes having a player select a plurality of numbers, such as the numbers below:

25 35 8 15 42

The random number generator of the gaming module is then engaged. By way of example the random number results are:

56 2 3 8 42

The payable module is then programmed to interpret the random numbers generating by the gaming module according to the following illustrative rules:

1. If a match between one number is achieved, then a prize of 1x the initial bet credit is awarded and an image ID XQ23-1396 is used. Image ID XQ23-1396 is an animated plurality of images representing three cherries.

2. If a match between one number at the same location is achieved, then a prize of 2x the initial bet credit is awarded and an image ID XQ23-1397 is used. Image ID XQ23-1397 is an animated plurality of images representing four cherries.

3. If a match between a first number is achieved and a match between a second number is achieved, then a prize of 5x the initial credit is awarded and an image ID XQ23-1998 is used. Image ID XQ23-1998 is an animated plurality of images representing 3 oranges.

4. If a match between a first number at the same location is achieved and a match between a second number is achieved, then a prize of 7x the initial credit is awarded and an image ID XQ23-1999 is used. Image ID XQ23-1999 is an animated plurality of images representing 4 oranges.

Thus, for the illustrative example provided above, the player having selected the numbers: 23, 35, 8, 15 and 42 is entitled to a prize of 7x the initial credit for a random number: 56, 2, 3, 8, and 42. The associated images displayed on the network access device are an animated plurality of images representing 4 oranges.

The scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents rather than by the examples given.

What is claimed is:

1. A networked gaming system comprising:
 - a user identification received by at least one network access device, wherein the user identification includes a user biometric, which is communicated from the network access device to an authentication server that includes a registration database, the user identification and the user biometric compared with registration data in the registration database;
 - a network access device that includes at least one network access device identifier, which is communicated from the network access device to the server that includes the registration database, the network access device identifier compared with registration data in the registration database;
 - wherein a player is provided access to a game when the user identification matches the registered player data and the network access device registration matches the registered network access device data;
 - a transactional component that charges the registered player at least one credit for a game outcome;
 - a networked gaming module associated with a gaming server, wherein the networked gaming module performs game operations and generates at least one random game output;
 - the networked gaming module associates the at least one random game output with an image ID and communicates the image ID from the gaming server to the network access device; and
 - the networked gaming module communicates one or more images corresponding to the image ID to the network access device.
2. The networked gaming system of claim 1 further comprising a countdown timer that provides a window of time for other players to join the game.
3. The networked gaming system of claim 1 further comprising an encryption module, the encryption module configured to encrypt the one or more images communicated to at least one network access device.

4. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the one or more images communicated to the at least one network access device are viewable on a browser.

5. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the at least one network access device includes a gaming terminal.

6. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the at least one network access device includes a wireless device.

7. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the one or more images communicated to the at least one network access device include a slot machine game outcome.

8. The networked gaming system of claim 7, wherein the networked gaming module generates the random game output with a lottery game.

9. A networked gaming system comprising:

- a registration database that includes a registered player biometric and a registered network access device data;
- at least one network access device that includes at least one network access device identifier, which is communicated from the at least one network access device to an authentication server that includes the registration database;
- an input player biometric that is received by the at least one network access device, wherein the input player biometric is communicated from the at least one network access device to the authentication server;

wherein a player is provided access to a game when the input player biometric matches the registered player biometric and the network access device registration matches the registered network access device data;

a transactional component that charges the registered player at least one credit for a game outcome;

a networked gaming module associated with a gaming server, wherein the networked gaming module performs game operations and generates at least one random game output;

the networked gaming module associates the at least one random game output with an image ID and communicates the image ID from the gaming server to the network access device; and

the networked gaming module communicates one or more images corresponding to the image ID to the network access device.

10. The networked gaming system of claim 9 further comprising a countdown timer that provides a window of time for other players to join the game.

11. The networked gaming system of claim 9 further comprising an encryption module, the encryption module configured to encrypt the one or more images communicated to at least one network access device.

12. The networked gaming system of claim 9, wherein the one or more images communicated to the at least one network access device are viewable on a browser.

13. The networked gaming system of claim 9, wherein the at least one network access device includes a gaming terminal.

14. The networked gaming system of claim 9, wherein the at least one network access device includes a wireless device.

15. The networked gaming system of claim 9, wherein the one or more images communicated to the at least one network access device include a slot machine outcome.

16. The networked gaming system of claim 9, wherein the one or more images communicated to the at least one network access device include a slot machine outcome.

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17. A networked gaming method comprising:
 receiving a user identification from at least one network
 access device, wherein the user identification includes
 a user biometric, wherein the at least one network
 access device includes at least one network access
 device identifier;
 communicating, by the at least one network access device,
 the user identification to an authentication server that
 includes a registration database;
 communicating, by the at least one network access device,
 the at least one network access device identifier;
 comparing, by the authentication server, the user identi-
 fication with registration data in the registration data-
 base;
 comparing, by the authentication server, the at least one
 network access device identifier with registration data
 in the registration database;
 confirming, by the authentication server, that the user
 identification matches registration data in the registra-
 tion database;
 confirming, by the authentication server, that the at least
 one network access device identifier matches registra-
 tion data in the registration database;
 providing a player with access to a game, wherein the
 player corresponds to the user identification;
 charging the player at least one credit for a game outcome;
 enabling a networked gaming module to perform the
 game operations and generate at least one random game
 output, wherein the networked gaming module is asso-
 ciated with a gaming server;
 enabling the networked gaming module to associate the at
 least one random game output with an image ID;
 communicating, by the networked gaming module, the
 image ID to the at least one network access device; and
 enabling the networked gaming module to communicate
 one or more images corresponding to the image ID to
 the network access device.

18. The networked gaming method of claim 17 further
 comprising enabling a countdown timer to provide a win-
 dow of time for other players to join the game.

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19. The networked gaming method of claim 17 further
 comprising encrypting the one or more images communi-
 cated from the networked gaming module to the at least one
 network access device.

20. The networked gaming method of claim 17, wherein
 the one or more images communicated to the at least one
 network access device are viewable on a browser.

21. The networked gaming method of claim 17, wherein
 the at least one network access device includes a gaming
 terminal.

22. The networked gaming method of claim 17, wherein
 the at least one network access device includes a wireless
 device.

23. The networked gaming method of claim 17, wherein
 the one or more images communicated to the network access
 device include a slot machine game outcome.

24. The networked gaming method of claim 23, wherein
 the networked gaming module generates the random game
 output with a lottery game.

25. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the
 authentication server is configured to compare the user
 identification, the user biometric, and the network access
 device identifier with registration data in the registration
 database; and

the authentication server is further configured to provide
 the player access to the game when the user identifi-
 cation, the user biometric, and the network access
 device identifier match the registration data in the
 registration database.

26. The networked gaming system of claim 1, wherein the
 authentication server is configured to compare the input
 player biometric and the network access device identifier
 with corresponding registration data in the registration data-
 base; and

the authentication server is further configured to provide
 the player access to the game when the input player
 biometric and the network access device identifier
 match the registration data in the registration database.

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